



Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

Fort Hood, Texas



FACT SHEET

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Robertson Blood Center

Darnall Army Community Hospital's Robertson Blood Center at Fort Hood is the largest blood collection facility in the Department of the Army. Robertson Blood Center collects over 5,400 blood products each month, to include red cells, platelets and plasma products. Darnall Hospital and other military medical facilities throughout the world use the blood products tested at RBC. Soldiers and their family members are the primary recipients of blood products collected and tested at RBC. Occasionally, the blood center sends blood products to civilian facilities during emergencies.

History

The Robertson Blood Center is dedicated to Dr. Oswald H. Robertson, the "Father of Blood Banking." Robertson was born in England in 1886. His father was an English army officer and his mother was from Ireland. They moved to Fresno, California, when Robertson was 2 years old. He did premedical studies at the University of California (Berkeley) and graduated cum laude from Harvard Medical School in 1915.

He was commissioned in the Army Medical Corps during World War I and served in the 5th Base Station Hospital in France. There he was assigned to investigate the treatment of shock and its affects on soldiers at British casualty-clearing stations.

In November 1917, he built an ice chest from two ammunition cases, took 22 units of blood to a casualty-clearing station and used them to resuscitate Canadian soldiers judged too deep in shock for surgery. Eleven of the 20 recipients lived. This was the first use of cold blood storage or "banked blood."

As a result of the success of his program, Dr. Robertson was assigned the task of training transfusion teams for the British Expeditionary Force. His transfusion teams became a common sight in battalion aid stations and divisional transfusion cellars, the latter, large underground bunkers where blood was drawn, typed, cross-matched, and transfused to prepare casualties for surgery. His work was recognized as among the most significant medical contributions of the war. The British Government awarded him the Distinguished Service Order.

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Robertson built a donor and transfusion service that would be recognized today. He collected blood from previously typed "universal" donors by needle venipuncture. Blood flowed through rubber tubes into glass bottles containing citrate and dextrose solution. He stored these bottles in ice for up to 26 days and transported them to casualty clearing stations where they were needed.

Excerpts from "The First Blood Banker: Oswald Hope Robertson," by J. R. Hess and P. J. Schmidt in the January 2000 edition of the magazine Transfusion.

License and Accreditation

Robertson Blood Center is licensed by the Food and Drug Administration and accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks. All blood facilities in the Army operate under one FDA license, with the ultimate responsibility and direction provided by the Army Blood Program Office, U. S. Army Medical Command at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Donations

The entire donation process takes about one hour, including registration, medical and social history, screening, and blood collection. There is no risk of exposure to any infectious disease from the donation procedure because only sterile supplies are used.

Who can donate blood to RBC?

The Robertson Blood Center accepts donations from healthy, eligible donors eighteen years of age or older. A donor must weigh at least 110 pounds. Every donor is screened for health conditions and medicines taken to insure their safety and the purity of the donation. The requirements change as new tests and technologies are used. Please check with the donor center for the latest qualifications and deferrals.

Previous Donations

There must be an interval of 56 days (8 weeks) or more between donations of whole blood. There must be an interval of 14 days between platelet pheresis donations.

Immunizations and Vaccinations

Person who recently received toxoids (killed bacteria), bacterial, or rickettsial vaccines may donate if they are free of symptoms and without fever. Vaccines include those against anthrax, cholera, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, paratyphoid, pertussis, plague, polio (injection), tetanus, typhoid, and typhus.

Individuals who recently received vaccines for typhoid (oral), measles (rubeola), mumps, polio (oral), or yellow fever are deferred for two weeks.

The German measles (Rubella) and chicken pox vaccines will cause deferrals for four weeks.

Illness and Deferrals

Robertson Blood Center staff members conduct a donor-history interview to identify illnesses the prospective donors may have. A donor's response to questions about past or current illnesses may cause the person to be deferred. For example, a history of hepatitis is cause for permanent deferral. HIV exposure, infection and questionable social activities that increase the risk for HIV are also causes for deferral.

Other deferrals include:

- Tattoo & skin piercing – 1 year deferral
- Recipient of a blood product – 1 year
- Malaria – 1 year after the end of treatment or return from a malaria endemic country
- Soldiers returning from Korea – 2 to 3 years
- Soldiers stationed in Europe from 1980-1996

Other Blood Services

Autologous Donations

Donating your own blood for a future surgery is called an autologous donation. By donating your own blood, you guarantee that the blood you receive is safe and compatible. Individuals scheduled for surgery may want to discuss with their physician the option of donating their own blood before surgery.

Platelet Apheresis Program

Apheresis is a unique process that allows a donor to give specific blood cells. One of those is called platelets. Platelets help blood coagulate, which is helpful in injuries. There is a much higher demand for platelets than for other blood products due to its short shelf life. An apheresis procedure takes about two hours, and the donor usually does not experience any weakness since the red cells are returned to the donor during the procedure. Another apheresis process collects red blood cells.

Bone Marrow Program

Thousands of patients with life-threatening diseases are waiting for bone marrow transplants. Patients and donors must have matching tissue types to for patients to receive bone marrow. A small amount of blood is donated. It is then typed and placed on a national database. Most matches are found among people with a similar ethnicity. The Department of Defense and the National Bone Marrow Program cooperate to increase the national database of potential marrow donors. Registration in the program requires a five-minute history and small tube of blood.

Location and Hours

The Robertson Blood Center, located in building 2250 on 761st Tank Battalion Avenue is open Monday through Wednesday from 7:30-11:30 a.m. and from 1-3:30 p.m. It is open Thursday from 1-3:30 p.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. to noon.

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